

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, October 3, 1896, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B.

Saturday, October 3, 1896. Dear Mabel:

Haven't anything to say — and so say it just to show you that I am thinking of you — and trying to write to you every day — if only a line.

Mr. Kennan and Mr. Harrington took supper here tonight. Lina McCurdy called in the course of the afternoon — and remained to supper and presided at the table. She seems terribly lonely now that you all are away. She proposes starting on Tuesday morning and will thus have the company of Mrs. and Miss Ellis who start at the same time. Mr. McCurdy was here also. Had an oil talk. Mr. Harrington, though evidently a very illiterate man, seems to be a man of brains. He seems to have big ideas; and with more education would undoubtedly have been a man of force.

He came to this country as a gold-miner — and worked at the mines near Sherbrooke. One of his plans was to start a railroad from New Glasgow directly to a port on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia (Liscomb Harbor) — and he nearly carried it through.

The idea of “Terminal City” also originated with him, and he succeeded in interesting Kikker Peabody and Co. — of Boston in the enterprise. He still believes in the plan — and holds on to his land.

While engaged at work in the Nova Scotia gold fields a friend told him of the black oily substance found floating 2 on Lake Ainslie — and offered to get him some of it for examination. For Harrington had been engaged in the oil fields of Pennsylvania and should know crude petroleum when he saw it. His friend went to Lake Ainslie — dug a

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hole through the ice — and with a teaspoon succeeded in skimming off enough of the oily substance to fill a small bottle. Upon returning to “Goldensville” he gave the bottle to Harrington — who left next morning for Lake Ainslie — for he recognized the stuff as crude petroleum.

Then he started the Oil Company which ended disasterously. He says that at least a hundred barrels of oil came from the hole — and that it even now discharges gas. He gave a graphical description of the results of applying a match to the gas when it first appeared. An explosion followed — the man who did so had his whiskers burned off on one side of his face — and a flame shot up more than thirty feet high which burned for some hours before they could put it out. They were afraid it would burn up the derrick and the woodwork about — and finally they extinguished it by covering the hole with a rug and piling earth on the top. He was also connected with the explorations for oil in Big Baddock — where several wells were sunk by rival parties — who quarrelled with one another. Then there was considerable litigation among them — with the final abandonment of the enterprise.

I notice in a geological report that \$20,000 were sunk in the Lake Ainslie Experiment and \$100,000 in the various wells about Middle River and Big Baddeck. 3 Perhaps your father should know this before going very far into the enterprise.

Did you read of the escape of Lord and Lady Russell from the Bryan Tammory Hall meeting by means of a fire-escape!

Your loving husband, Alec.